

Purdue University

Purdue e-Pubs

NSF Workshop Fostering Gender and Work-Life Inclusion for Faculty in Understudied Contexts:
An Organizational Science Lens

Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

Five key inhibitors of women's advancement in business schools

Maria Triana

maria.triana@wisc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/worklifeinclusion>

Recommended Citation

Triana, M. (2020). Five Key Inhibitors of Women's Advancement in Business Schools. In E. Kossek & K.-H. Lee (Eds.), *Fostering Gender and Work-Life Inclusion for Faculty in Understudied Contexts: An Organizational Science Lens* (pp. 140-144). West Lafayette, IN: Purdue e-Pubs. DOI: 10.5703/1288284317225. Retrieved from <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/worklifeinclusion/2018/fgwli/1>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Five Key Inhibitors of Women's Advancement in Business Schools

María Triana

University of Wisconsin-Madison

What is holding back women and those faculty with a strong family identity from advancing to senior leadership positions at business schools? What needs to change from an organizational strategy and performance perspective?

There are many factors holding back women from advancing to senior leadership positions at business schools.

Lack of clock from Associate Professor to Full Professor. Unlike the tenure clock which requires an Assistant Professor to have an up or out decision made by the end of their sixth year, there is no such clock for promotion to Full Professor. This means that people (men or women) may be left at that level for a considerable number of years. Due to this ambiguity about when someone should be considered for a promotion to Full Professor, the decision often gets postponed.

Heavy emphasis on A publications. Because business schools value publishing in top-tier journals above all else, that creates a very high bar for people to achieve promotion to Full Professor, which is required to also be a Dean. In the case of women with children, a couple of Associate Professors have told me directly that they have given up trying to get promoted until their children are grown up. They have too many responsibilities at home and want to be able to spend time with their children. In fact, one specifically lamented being mean to her children during one summer when she was trying to push forward a journal revision, and then regretting that choice when the revision was later rejected. The following summer she declined support and told the school to keep their money so that she could spend a peaceful summer with her children. Two other professors I know had been led to believe that there was an alternative path to becoming a Full Professor which required less research and would acknowledge strong service contributions. They later found out that this alternative path to promotion was a myth and they invested much time in service roles which gave them no credit. Moreover, the nature of the publication process punishes those who do not work on enough projects with enough colleagues, because acceptance rates are very low at the top journals. Therefore, working on fewer projects may help provide work-life balance, but it inevitably poses a higher risk of taking a longer time for promotion.

Masculine culture. Academia has a very masculine culture, and the overwhelming majority of Full Professors in business schools are men. Most of these men have a stay-at-

home wife or a wife whose job is secondary to theirs. Things are usually taken care of at home for them. Also, because they generally have a good experience at work, they do not conceptualize work the same way that most women do, because they do not experience the problems of most women. For example, my experience and that of other women I know in academia would attest to the fact that most universities have elements of an old boys culture. This means exposure to: hostile work environment sexual harassment, locker room talk during meetings, situations where senior male faculty members engage in sexual relationships with, assault, or proposition junior female faculty members or doctoral students, late-night Academy parties in hotel rooms or at bars which last until 2 AM and involve people getting drunk, and implicit bias in decision-making associating men with success more so than women. This is exactly what research on implicit bias shows, namely that three quarters of the population more rapidly associates men with careers and women with home and family (Nosek et al., 2007). This type of masculine culture creates a context where women either risk sexual harassment/assault, need to pretend to be one of the boys and enjoy the culture, or a situation where women disengage from this type of context and decide it is not worth it to partake of the culture. Either way, there are risks for women. In the event that women disengage, there is also the added challenge that they may be seen as aloof or a party pooper. This could come back to hurt them in promotion decisions where the senior faculty members have all the power and must usher their tenure case through the bureaucratic process. This could also be limiting in terms of getting on research papers with colleagues and doctoral students which could get published and, ultimately, make promotion more likely.

A very hierarchical structure. In academia, the power is concentrated at the top and every level of the organization is evaluated by all levels above them. This creates a culture of silence and putting up with things one does not like at lower levels. Several faculty members have commented to me that until they got tenure, they would not dare speak out or complain about anything. The promotion process is handled only by tenured faculty, and in the case of promotion to Full Professor, the case will go nowhere unless the Full Professors in your department are in agreement to pursue your tenure case. This means that even at the Associate Professor level, one must be careful in picking one's battles. Otherwise, the Full Professors can turn on you and you will never get promoted. All of this contributes to women being quiet about the problems they see in academia, because otherwise, they may be labeled troublemakers or other names. Again, disengaging is a form of being quiet to avoid complaining, and this can also lead one to be labeled as aloof or disengaged.

You are so good at doing service (oh wait, but service doesn't count). Because of stereotypes of women being kind, nurturing, sympathetic, and helpful (Heilman, 2001), women are very often elected, nominated, and asked to serve on committees and major service roles. This is especially true in committees related to diversity (e.g., women and minorities in organizations) where representation from minority groups is sought. Oftentimes, this overwhelms women and results in them serving on more committees which take time and do not count for anything at promotion/review time.

How will implementing gender and work life inclusion enhance organizational performance?

This will only work if the reward structure in academia is changed. All that matters right now is top-tier publications by your next five-year review. If those publications are not there, the Dean has the right to invoke a list of punishments including reducing faculty pay, taking research resources/budget away, and increasing teaching load. That increases the downward spiral, making one less likely to be promoted. In my experience, talk of work-life balance and inclusion is not backed up with substantive action or flexible policies.

What is holding back women and those faculty with a strong family identity from advancing to senior leadership positions at business schools? What needs to change from an organizational strategy and performance perspective?

All of the items mentioned above are holding women back. In order to change, we need more people in leadership who understand that these issues above are systemic and culturally ingrained in the overwhelming majority of business schools. Those people at the top of the University need to be willing to implement diversity and inclusion practices that make it easier for women and for faculty with family obligations to have a more flexible career path. This includes revamping leave structures and allowing access and benefits to support people with children and other family responsibilities to balance work and life demands. This also involves completely changing the culture so that those who take time off to work on something other than research are not stigmatized as not being serious about their careers or as being unsuccessful faculty members. Schools also need to give faculty members credit for publications that are high quality even if they are not in the most premier A outlets possible. Those publications still contribute to school prestige and accreditation, and this would make it more attainable for people to excel in academia. It is also important for reward structures to take into account major teaching accomplishments and service accomplishments in promotion decisions, because these are necessary to the efficient running of the school and to meeting its teaching mission. School leadership often talks about the importance of acknowledging peer-reviewed publications as

well as strong teaching and service contributions. But in the experience of many tenured faculty, when the five-year review rolls around, all that matters is top-tier publications.

Schools should also be holding leaders accountable for implementing diversity management practices, and for the selection, advancement, and retention of women, minorities, and people with family obligations in organizations. Academia is currently structured as if everyone were a White male, married, heterosexual, with a stay at home or secondary wage earning spouse, and able-bodied. The reward structures, the culture, and the expectations around productivity and time off have been structured by and for faculty members who meet this description over time, and that has shaped the culture in academia to this day. The culture itself needs to be more inclusive, and the measures taken to become more inclusive need to be enforced by the top leaders at the university and at the schools of business in order for things to change.

References

- Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(4), 657-674.
- Nosek, B. A., Smyth, F. L., Hansen, J. J., Devos, T., Lindner, N. M., Ranganath, K. A., Smith, C. T., Olson, K. R., Chugh, D., Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R., (2007). Pervasiveness and correlates of implicit attitudes and stereotypes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18(1), 36-88.